

ANNUAL AND FINAL REPORT
South Carolina State Wildlife Grant SC-T-F17AF00122
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
December 9, 2016 – September 30, 2017

Project Title: The SEARS Program - 2016 South Carolina Contribution
(Participation by SC in the SEARS Program)

Objective: To support the administration and implementation of the regional SEARS Program initiative through SEAFWA including development and implementation of conservation actions at a regional/multi-state level.

Accomplishments: To accomplish the SEARS Program's objectives, the annual contributions of the participating state's funding and matching funds will support third-party implementation of the SEARS Program through the SEAFWA main office. Cooperating states in the SEAFWA will donate funding to a central pot of money in order to fund projects selected for that year's funding cycle. Funding for this work is the balance of contributed funding from each state, generally equivalent to 2% of the current fiscal year SWG apportionment for each participant, unless otherwise specified.

Currently, there are three SEARS grants running concurrently. All states less two have completed their payment into the program. South Carolina paid its invoice to SEAFWA on 6/1/2017 with SCDNR check number 142928641 which was received and deposited on 6/13/2017 by Angelyn Mewborn, SEAFWA Financial Administrator.

Significant deviations: None.

Estimated Federal Cost: \$12,464 (amount spent this year)

Recommendations: Close the grant.

Report Submitted by: Anna H. Smith, SCDNR SWAP/SWG Coordinator

See Appendix A for original Proposal.

APPENDIX A
Project Proposal
South Carolina State Wildlife Grants Project
December 9, 2016 – September 30, 2017

Project Title: The SEARS Program - 2016 South Carolina Contribution

Principle Investigators (PIs): Anna H. Smith, SWG Coordinator, SCDNR and SEAFWA-WDC

Project Collaborators: Member States in the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA)

Project Location: Various

Grant Objective:

To support the administration and implementation of the regional SEARS Program initiative, including development and implementation of conservation actions at a regional/multi-state level.

Need

The mission of the Southeastern At-Risk Species (SEARS) Program is to implement the SEAFWA Species Action Plan, developed by SEAFWA's Wildlife Diversity Committee. Successful implementation of the Program will be realized through the landscape-level cooperative management, monitoring, and research focused on at-risk species, such as the state's Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), and selected habitats coordinated by SEAFWA member states that delivers effective conservation and minimizes biological, ecological, or social justifications for Federal listing of species under the Endangered Species Act.

The SEARS Program encourages regional collaboration because the issues facing many at-risk species cannot be meaningfully addressed by individual states. This program is positioned to be one of the most significant joint endeavors directed by state fish and wildlife agencies to effectively address critical landscape-scale wildlife conservation needs. It will complement work accomplished in individual states and through other regional efforts, while keeping the work relevant to member states.

South Carolina's SWAP supports initiatives that seek to research, survey, and ultimately manage for at-risk species. For clarification purposes though, we have submitted an Emerging Issues letter to cover the scope of the SEARS Program.

Purpose of SEARS:

1. Develop and implement an information-sharing system or framework that will help states and Federal agencies communicate and coordinate activities on at-risk species, including SGCN and petitioned species.
2. Establish the framework of criteria to identify and prioritize which species to undertake together.
3. Develop and implement a robust, coordinated, and integrated status assessment, inventory, monitoring, and research effort across the region to address data gaps and inform conservation planning for prioritized species.

4. Develop and implement a coordinated approach to addressing regional threats and conservation actions, and overcoming barriers, so as to ensure sustainable populations and habitats.

A further description of the program structure and process can be found in the annual SEARS report to the SEAFWA Wildlife Diversity Committee.

Approach

To accomplish its objectives, the annual contributions of the participating state's funding and matching funds will support third-party implementation of the SEARS Program through the SEAFWA main office. Cooperating states in the SEAFWA will donate funding to a central pot of money in order to fund projects selected for that year's funding cycle. Funding for this work is the balance of contributed funding from each state, generally equivalent to 2% of the current fiscal year SWG apportionment for each participant, unless otherwise specified.

The SEARS Program will identify high priority species of regional concern and jointly determine appropriately-focused projects and the appropriate methods to implement the projects, including in-house through state fish and wildlife agencies or through the use of a directed RFP approach, as needed, to contract with experts on the particular taxa/issue. Successful grant recipients will be required to provide match for requested funds on at least a 65:35 basis (cash or in-kind). SEAFWA will handle the administrative aspects of the program while lead states for the various projects will oversee funding and reporting compliance and will forward these to SEAFWA. Depending on the recommended approach advanced by the WDC (self-directed versus RFP), the annual expectations with respect to project coordination may vary slightly, but would include:

- Solicitation and receipt of proposals, if needed (in coordination with WDC)
- Distribution of proposals to Committee teams and regional Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) staff for initial review and confirmation of compliance/eligibility (in coordination with WDC)
- Receipt and distribution of project quarterly and final reports, and receipt and payment of invoices (upon WDC approval of reports)
- Development and submission of annual WSFR reports (performance and fiscal)
- Identification and development of a minimum of three (3) proposals or grant applications for other sources of funding (in coordination with WDC)

The 2016 SEARS focused projects were selected through an RFP, and the grant recipients are:

1. "Population genetic assessment of MacGillivray's Seaside Sparrow (*Ammodramus maritimus macgillivrayi*) as a potentially threatened taxon" [PIs: Dr. Stefan Woltmann, Austin Peay State University in TN; Dr. Christopher E. Hill, Coastal Carolina University in SC]
2. "Distributional surveys, taxonomic investigation, and conservation assessment of crayfishes in the Duck River Watershed of Tennessee and the Santee River Basin in North and South Carolina" [PIs: Dr. Zachary Laughman, West Liberty University in WV; Dr. Bronwyn Williams at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences]
3. "Status Surveys for the Rattlesnake Master Borer Moth (*Papaipema eryngii*) in the Southeast Region" [PI: Dr. James Bess, Northland Environmental Services, LLC in MI]

The SEARS program will operate during the 2016 funding cycle followed by a hiatus. At that time, the Wildlife Diversity Committee will conduct an objective assessment of the SEARS program and present it to the Directors for consideration, along with a recommendation regarding extension/renewal/dissolution of the program and associated funding. An ad-hoc review committee is being assembled.

Expected Benefits

Selected projects will seek to answer fundamental questions related to the life history, genetics, and management of several petitioned species, which also are State-designated SGCN. Knowledge gained from these projects will assist the USFWS with its listing determinations as well as give the states in which the species reside needed information on their range and population health. All selected projects have their own distinct methodologies which are defined in their proposals on file with SEAFWA and the lead states.

Compliance Statements

The proposed SEARS Program concept (i) anticipates a NEPA compliance categorical exclusion of B(1), (ii) will not create public controversy, (iii) will have no known or anticipated adverse environmental impact, (iv) is not related to other activities that cumulatively will have known or anticipated adverse environmental impact, (v) does not involve a non-native species, (vi) does not involve a unique geographic area, (vii) will seek tribal consult to ensure that it will not affect districts sites or objects eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (viii) will not affect public health or safety, and (ix) will not directly or indirectly impact an endangered, threatened, or otherwise protected species, so we expect the service to concur with a section 7 biological evaluation of “no effect”. (x) To satisfy NHPA requirements, a consult with the SHPO will be sought if necessary. In a letter dated 12/6/16, the USFWS-SE Region has formally delegated consultation authority for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) to the SCDNR.

Statement regarding single audit: Financial transactions of the SCDNR are subject to the auditing procedures outlined in 2 CFR 200, Subpart F, Audit Requirements. The State of South Carolina was required to submit a Statewide Single Audit report for its most recently closed fiscal year and that report is available on the Federal Audit Clearinghouse Single Audit Database website. The report is filed under the State of South Carolina’s EIN (57-6000286).

Statement regarding indirect costs: We are a state government entity receiving less than \$35 million in direct Federal funding with an indirect cost rate of 15.62% (expires June 30, 2017). We are required to prepare and retain for audit an indirect cost rate proposal and related documentation to support those costs. Our indirect cost agreement is on file with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Conflict of Interest Statement: SCDNR, at the time of this application, is not aware of any actual or potential conflicts of interest that may arise during the life of this award which may affect the SCDNR, its employees, or its sub-recipients. Should an actual or potential conflict of interest arise during the period of performance, then we will notify the WSFR Regional Office.

Budget Narrative

SEAFWA will be overseeing the management of the funds that will go towards this year's SEARS grant recipients. **Of the available funds listed below, \$89,770.21 is from non-federal (match) sources, leaving only \$28,985.90 as the SEARS Program (federal) share.** The SEARS Program is greatly over-matched. Therefore, overall match obtained by using cooperating states' non-federal contributions will be subsequently allocated to each participant state that is using SWG funds for the purposes of meeting SWG match requirements.

States	2016 SEARS Federal Contribution	2016 SEARS Match	Sources
Alabama ¹	\$0	\$0	-
Arkansas ¹	\$0	\$0	(previously SWG)
Florida ²	\$0	\$45,341.00	Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida funds
Georgia	\$0	\$13,598.29	Nongame funds
Kentucky	\$0	\$6,833.73	Non-federal funds
Louisiana	\$7,426.08	\$0	State funds
Mississippi ¹	\$0	\$0	-
Missouri ²	\$0	\$19,657.00	State revenue
North Carolina	\$0	\$28,310.00	Non-federal funds
Oklahoma	\$0	\$15,000.00	State funds
South Carolina	\$12,464.00	\$0	SWG funds
Tennessee	\$9,095.82	\$0	State funds ("comprehensive coverage")
Texas ¹	\$0	\$0	-
Virginia	\$0	\$20,883.00	Nongame state tax check-off
West Virginia	\$0	\$5,145.19	State funds
TOTALS	\$28,985.90	\$154,768.21	\$183,754.11
TOTAL AVAILABLE FOR PROJECTS	\$28,985.90	\$89,770.21	\$118,756.11
2016 Selected Projects	SEARS Funds	Projects Additional Match	States in which project is operating
<i>MacGillvray's Seaside Sparrow</i>	\$47,361	\$30,262 (38.98%)	FL, GA, SC, NC, VA, MD, CT, NJ
<i>Crayfish in Saluda/Duck Rivers</i>	\$26,670	\$15,972 (37.4%)	TN, NC, SC
<i>Rattlesnake Master Borer Moth</i>	\$44,725	\$31,175 (40.1%)	AR, KY, NC, FL, LA, MS, SC, AL, GA, TN
TOTAL	\$118,756	\$77,409	

¹State currently not participating in the program for 2016.

²Florida and Missouri funds will not go toward the projects because they were used for the data coordination component that is not applicable here. Total FL contributions: \$85,726.